

**Transaction Redirection Mechanism For
Handling Late Specification Changes And Design Errors**

Cross-Reference to Related Applications

The following patent applications, all assigned to the assignee of this application, describe related aspects of the arrangement and operation of multiprocessor computer systems according to this invention or its preferred embodiment.

U.S. patent application serial number __/__/__ by T. B. Berg et al.
(BEA919990003US1) entitled "Method And Apparatus For Increasing Requestor Throughput By Using Data Available Withholding" was filed on January __, 2002.

U.S. patent application serial number __/__/__ by T. B. Berg et al.
(BEA920000017US1) entitled "Method And Apparatus For Using Global Snooping To Provide Cache Coherence To Distributed Computer Nodes In A Single Coherent System" was filed on January __, 2002.

U.S. patent application serial number __/__/__ by T. B. Berg et al.
(BEA920000018US1) entitled "Multi-level Classification Method For Transaction Address Conflicts For Ensuring Efficient Ordering In A Two-level Snoopy Cache Architecture" was filed on January __, 2002.

U.S. patent application serial number __/__/__ by T. B. Berg et al.
(BEA920000020US1) entitled "Method And Apparatus For Multi-path Data Storage And Retrieval" was filed on January __, 2002.

U.S. patent application serial number __/__/__ by W. A. Downer et al.
(BEA920000021US1) entitled "Hardware Support For Partitioning A Multiprocessor System To Allow Distinct Operating Systems" was filed on January __, 2002.

BEA920000019US1

U.S. patent application serial number ____/____ by T. B. Berg et al.
(BEA920000022US1) entitled "Distributed Allocation Of System Hardware Resources For
Multiprocessor Systems" was filed on January __, 2002.

U.S. patent application serial number ____/____ by W. A. Downer et al.
(BEA920010030US1) entitled "Masterless Building Block Binding To Partitions" was filed on
January __, 2002.

U.S. patent application serial number ____/____ by W. A. Downer et al.
(BEA920010031US1) entitled "Building Block Removal From Partitions" was filed on January
__, 2002.

U.S. patent application serial number ____/____ by W. A. Downer et al.
(BEA920010041US1) entitled "Masterless Building Block Binding To Partitions Using
Identifiers And Indicators" was filed on January __, 2002.

Background Of The Invention

Technical Field

The present invention relates to a method and system for redefinition of permitted
transactions and associated responses in a data processing system to avoid delay and cost
impact from late specification changes in the design of application specific integrated circuits.

Background Of The Related Art

In the planning of complex hardware for computer systems or other digital processing
equipment, numerous and complex transactions are contemplated in the design of application
specific integrated circuits (ASIC), used in the implementation of a system. Such ASIC devices
may include memory controllers and other subsystem components designed for a particular
data processing system. In such data or information processing systems, it is not uncommon

that there are late specification changes in the design process which result in system response errors that must be corrected.

For system speed and chip density purposes, system logic is normally formed and manufactured into an ASIC which, once manufactured, may not be altered or changed without going through a redesign process. Such a redesign usually is expensive in terms of retooling and retesting the ASIC. When the ASIC finally reaches post-silicon testing, it may be discovered that a transaction in the system design may not be handled correctly and may stop forward progress of the system development and testing. Such delays cause expense in terms of time to market and add additional development cost because of changes that would be required. There is presently no mechanism to allow simple and effective redefinition of allowed transactions and associated responses within a system so that an ASIC may continue to operate without production changes.

In the past, the problem described was commonly addressed by designers of complex transaction handlers by using various mechanisms. First, configuration bits on one or more internal registers can sometimes be used to change configurations of the system so that problematic transactions or system bugs which arise cannot occur. Using such configuration bits often reduce system performance, limit the features available or usability of the system as a whole.

Other means for addressing this problem has included micro sequencer based transaction handlers. This technique is based on execution of microcode and thus the system can be reprogrammed to handle any of the problematic cases that may arise after post manufacturing. While the solution is versatile, computer systems which use microcode are usually unable to achieve the same clock speeds and logic densities as hard coded logic which is the preferred environment of many systems today.

Also, the problem has been addressed by the implementation of external pin outputs that are connected to the internals of transaction handlers that can be used to change the

response of the handler to specific and limited transaction problems. This latter technique of addressing the problem usually requires some ability to view internal transaction handler signals on physical pins introduced externally to the ASIC. This method of addressing the problem allows for the design of external hardware to generate the signals for the external pins. Further, the technique adds pins to the integrated circuit being designed and it is difficult, if not impossible, to provide full performance at high clock speeds. All of the above current techniques have identified drawbacks which the present invention addresses.

Summary Of The Invention

A first aspect of the invention is found in a method for handling operations within a hardware device. The method provides within the device information regarding the operation, including information identifying the operation. At least some of the identifying information of the operation is selected, and based thereon, at least some of the information regarding the operation is converted. The operation is then executed based upon the converted information.

Another aspect of the invention is found in a data processing system for executing an operation. The system comprises an identification store including information identifying at least selected operations executable by the system, and a comparator responsive to the operation and the identifying information. The system contains a substitute operation responsive to the comparator and the operation.

Yet another aspect of the invention is a method for redirecting an operation within a hardware device. Operations occurring within the device contain fields of information regarding the operation. The operations are compared with a preprogrammed list of responses, and the hardware device issues responses based on each operation. The method creates a list of identified operations for which a redirected response is desired. The method then compares an operation with the list of identified operations, and substitutes a redirected response from said preprogrammed list of responses.

And yet another aspect of the invention is a method for redirecting transactions within a hardware device, wherein the transactions occurring within the device contain fields of information regarding the transaction. In this method, fields to identify a transaction are loaded into a first register, and selected of the fields of said first register are acted upon. Transaction information to be redirected through a pre-programmed value for each said field is converted, and new transaction results are output.

Thus, it is the object of the present invention to provide a method of designing application specific integrated circuits to include a means to allow the redefinition of allowed transactions and the associated responses within said integrated circuit in order to avoid delays of time and expense if it is necessary to provide for a redirection of a defined transaction. It is further the object of the present invention to provide a series of software registers within the design of an application specific integrated circuit to create a transaction identifier register, a transaction mask register, and a transaction response register, all interconnected to operate and provide for the redirection of internal transactions in the application specific integrated circuit by comparing current transactions with identified transactions and providing a pre-determined response for such transactions. It is also the object of the present invention to provide both a method and a means to redirect action from a predefined look-up table in any data processing system in which it may be desirable to redirect the preprogram or hardwire output response from any given input in such system.

Other objects, features and advantages of this invention will become apparent from the following detailed description of its presently preferred embodiment, taken in conjunction with the accompanying drawings.

Brief Description Of The Drawing

Fig. 1 is a logic diagram illustrating the operation of the apparatus and the method of the preferred embodiment of the invention.

Detailed Description Of The Preferred Embodiment

Overview

The preferred embodiment of this invention provides blank data table entries which can be programmed after an application specific integrated circuit (ASIC) reaches post-silicon testing. The blank data table entries allow handling of unexpected operations or transactions. Storage means used with the method may be created through a variety of different hardware or software techniques. Identified operations within a predefined system of responsive outputs are redirected to such inputs by comparing current operations in a system with a list of identified operations and then selecting a predefined alternative response for such operation. A set of specific registers are created which provide for greater flexibility in the post-production operational alteration of an ASIC. The preferred embodiment utilizes three registers: a transaction identifier registers, a transaction mask register, and a transaction response register.

The first register, the transaction identifier register contains all of the data fields necessary to specifically identify a transaction, including whether it is a read or write, the length of the data, cache attributes, destination, or other information regarding the transaction.

The second register, the transaction mask register indicates which fields and bits within such fields in the first register are actually to be used for processing the redirection desired. Such second register allows the change in transaction response to apply to all reads to a specific destination regardless of the length of the field or cache attributes. The second register operates on the fields listed in the first register to provide control over a desired range of operations or transactions in which redirection of system responses is desired. The second

register may also be limited to change only the response for an 8-byte uncachable read to an input/output device.

The third register, the transaction response register contains the new values for all of the signals controlled by the transaction handler on which the method operates. When a matching transaction is identified by the first and second register pair, the transaction handler asserts the new values in response to the transaction thereby changing the response to the problematic transaction which appeared after the application specific integrated circuit has been manufactured.

Finally, a control bit is provided in the preferred embodiment to enable or disable operation of the redirection system, such that it may be bypassed if not necessary in post-silicon testing production.

Technical Background

In most computer systems, transactions occurring within the system which comprise the data flow are identified with a transaction number or a transaction data field enabled with binary code or other identifiers to keep track of the transaction. Transactions occur in computer systems in the normal course of operations on data, flowing between the system processor and the various other subsystems including memory, input/output devices and the like.

Many computer processing systems include memory control systems which work with one or more microprocessors to interface system memory to work with the processors. Such memory control systems are designed to provide direction and redirection to transactions as measured against a predefined look-up table or list of desired responses for a given defined transaction. In some instances, particularly in multinode computer systems, such memory control systems also communicate with other hardware devices such as a tag and address crossbar system as well as a data crossbar system. Memory control systems are frequently

hardwired as an application specific integrated circuit, thereby allowing little flexibility after its design with respect to changes in transaction responses in a specific system designed around such integrated circuit.

Many memory control systems operate by comparing a current transaction identification with a transaction look-up table prewired into any integrated circuit to provide a standard output response for each transaction provided in the design of the chip by the system designers. In a situation where a specific transaction provides a response that is originally unexpected during the design process of the chip containing a transaction look-up table, it is desirable to allow the system to be designed in advance to accept a selectable or definable alternative transaction look-up table for identified problem transactions. In such a system, it is not necessary to redesign the application specific integrated circuit to change the transaction look-up table or engage in other fixes which would be less desirable.

Technical Details

Fig. 1 illustrates the logic architecture and the process used in the preferred embodiment. A current transaction 62 is measured against the transaction look-up table 56 providing a standard output 77 as a preprogrammed response to the specific transaction. In the embodiment as shown in Fig. 1, the current transaction 62 is also introduced into comparator 58 at input 95. Comparator 58, if enabled through bit 72, allows comparison of current transaction information input at 95, with information provided to the comparator at input 94.

Transaction identifier register (TIR) 50 is a software register designed to store the identification of a transaction that may be identified in transaction look-up table 56 as providing an unexpected or undesirable response. There may be a variety of different transactions that, during the testing stage, have been identified as transactions of a certain identification 63, length 64, attribute 65 or target address 66 for which it is desired that the response originally programmed in transaction look-up table 56 should be altered to a redefined response which is

more desirable. Such identified transactions are loaded in TIR 50, and are communicated to transaction mask register (TMR) 52 which, as can be seen in Fig. 1, parallel the definitions of the fields shown in TIR 50. TMR 52 is comprised of a field for the transaction identifiers 67, the length 68, attribute 69 and target 70, similar to the fields shown in TIR 50.

5 TMR 52 allows for the selection of which bit, within the fields 63, 64, 65, and 66 in TIR 50, are acted upon or are of interest for the purpose of electing a new response for a given current transaction 62. When a bit is enabled in TMR 52 in each of its fields, (67, 68, 69 and 70), that bit acts as a filter for its corresponding bit in TIR 50 such that there must be a match exactly as presented in the corresponding bit in TIR 50. If a particular bit is set at zero in TMR 52, a "don't care" condition exists and the corresponding bit in TIR 50 is not filtered, but is instead ignored.

After TMR 52 operates on TIR 50, the pattern to match is presented by logic shown at 59. The patterns which are identified as requiring alteration shown in 59 consist of the same fields as TIR 50 and TMR 52. The transaction identification 90, length 91, attribute 92 and target 93 are presented to comparator input 94 to be compared against the current transaction 62 introduced to comparator 58 at 95. Accordingly, comparator 58 decides whether the current transaction matches the identification of a transaction to which an alternative transaction response is desired.

20 The effective logic carried out by comparator 58 is defined by: Output Response 73 = (Current Transaction 62 XNOR TIR 50) OR NOT(TMR 52). Mux control 73 (TRUE or FALSE) is determined by the exclusive NOR of the bits of current transaction 62 with the bits of TIR 50 and then (logically) OR'd with the inversion of the bits in TMR 52. By way of example, if all the bits are '1' in the end then comparator output 73 is TRUE (this is a bit-wise (logical) AND of the result).

25 If the fields of the current transaction 62 matches any pattern which is loaded into TIR 50 as processed by TMR 52, the preferred embodiment identifies that an alternate response is

necessary. Comparator 58 provides an output response at 73 to multiplexor (Mux) 60 which is then enabled to utilize an alternative transaction response as opposed to the standard output 77. Without comparator 58 intervention, Mux 60 would accept the standard output introduced to Mux 60 at 78.

If a transaction is identified as fitting the criteria selected by TIR 50 and TMR 52, the transaction response register (TRR) 54 provides an alternative response, preprogrammed or otherwise loaded with the desired, different response than the original transaction or response which would have been provided through the transaction look-up table 56. Accordingly, when transactions identified as requiring alterations are processed through the system, the corrected output at 76 will provide a new desired response as listed in register 54. It will be appreciated that all other transactions in which the response on transaction look-up table 56 are correct will be presented at standard output 77 in the normal course.

As can be seen, the application of TIR 50, TMR 52 and TRR 54 allow a combination which provides enhanced flexibility to correct problem responses to a designed transaction look-up table 56 which cannot be altered once an ASIC has been committed to silicon. Only those responses to problem transactions defined in TIR 50, as further defined by TMR 52, will evoke a response from TRR 54.

The logic diagram illustrated on Fig. 1 will now be used to provide an example of the operation of the preferred embodiment. TIR 50 is shown in the diagram with binary code below each field which would be used in the example. Transaction field 63 is loaded with the binary transaction identifier '10110'. TMR 52 has its transaction field 67 switched to '11111'. Since field 67 and TMR 52 have their bits all selected on, or enabled, the transaction identifier in field 63 will be passed through TMR 52 exactly as presented, and transaction identification 90 shown at 59 will appear unchanged from the transaction identifier in field 63. Moving to TIR 50 length at field 64, the bits entered in the example are '100'. Since TMR 52 has '000' selected in its length field 68, the result of field 68 operating on field 64 is a "don't care" as

depicted by common nomenclatures shown at 91 at 59. Accordingly, it will be appreciated that the transaction identified in TIR 50 at field 63 can be of any length in field 64 and not be further filtered or expanded by any operation of TMR 52 because its length field 68 has none of its bits enabled to further operate on field 64.

Continuing with the example shown in Fig. 1, TIR 50 is showing the transaction attribute field 65 of value '000'. TMR 52 has its attribute field 69 selected at '100'. The results of the operation require the first bit of field 65 to be conveyed at 69 as shown at 92. However, since the remaining two bits of field 69 are set at '0', it can be seen that the results in the next two bits at 92 is a "don't care" condition. Accordingly, any transaction with a leading bit attribute at field 65 will meet the criteria to be selected, the next two bits in field 65 will not make a difference in the identified transaction to be redirected. Continuing with the example, the target field 66 in TIR 50 uses an example field of '1000'. Field 70 of TMR 52 has its four bits all enabled, that is selected to '1111' thereby requiring that the resultant output at field 93, at 59 is conveyed exactly as presented in field 66.

TRR 54 is comprised of four fields, memory command 80, input/output (IO) command 81, attribute field 82, and target field 83. If a particular transaction is identified as a transaction requiring an alternate response, that is, different from the response originally programmed in transaction look-up table 56 TRR 54 provides the new response. The desired redirected response is loaded in TRR 54 to be communicated to input 79 at Mux 60 to present the corrected output 76. As described earlier, such redirected response from TRR 54 is only presented when comparator 58 recognizes that the current transaction matches the transaction output by the resulting signal from logic 59.

Advantages

Utilizing the redirection mechanism described above, it is also possible to define desired transaction responses for identified transactions which themselves may not have been

programmed into or designed into transaction look-up table 56. In the event that the transaction look-up table 56 is committed to silicon in the development of a specialized integrated circuit or any hardwired component, and it is determined that a transaction or other condition or state exists, the response for which has not been programmed or considered initially in the design of transaction lookup table 56, the present system and method can be used to define a response, thereby invoking a redirected output from TRR 54 to provide a desired response.

Alternatives

While three different registers are shown for the purpose of describing the operation of the preferred embodiment, it can also be appreciated that there may be one physical register that may be designed to perform the functions of TIR 50, TMR 52 and TRR 54 without being separate physical devices or registers. The entire method and system may be contained in a logic device which performs the operations of TIR 50, TMR 52 and the comparator 58. Further, more than one set of registers can be applied to the same lookup table to allow for adding or correcting more than one lookup table entry. It will be evident to those skilled in the art that the entire process may be carried out in one or more specialized components (e.g. registers; programmable logic devices; ASICs) which perform essentially the same functions as the logic illustrated in Fig. 1. The implementation of the design presented will depend on the complexity of look-up table 56 in a particular system, as well as the register size limits for the technology being used to implement the preferred embodiment described. It will therefore be understood that, while the preferred embodiment of the invention operates on transactions identified in a lookup table, the invention itself is applicable to redirection of any operations implemented using a lookup table.

While the TIR 50 of the preferred embodiment uses four identifying fields 63, 64, 65 and 66, it will be understood that the present invention is equally useful and beneficial with

additional or other identifying fields sufficient to identify operations to be redirected. For example, operations executable by a processor compatible with the Intel P7 processor bus could be identified for redirection according to the invention using some or all of the following fields of identifying information: request type REQ; attribute ATTR; byte enabled BE; and cache line flush bit FCL. It will further be understood that the identification of operations to be redirected may be performed over more than one clock cycle, especially where not all of the identifying information is available in a single cycle.

TIR 50 can also include response fields. For example, a field within TIR 50 which indicates whether a system had a hit on a address conflict queue can be included as a condition for redirection, even though such a field may relate to a different type of lookup structure as compared to the disclosure above describing the preferred embodiment. Adapting the invention to this alternative structure, for example, a redirected response would be presented if a certain response to the specified transaction occurs. Other such similar uses for the invention will be evident to those skilled in the art. Moreover, while the logic diagram in Fig. 1 discloses one way to utilize the invention, other logic structures which carry out the functions which are described in the disclosure will also be apparent to those skilled in the art. Such alternate means to carry out the invention are considered to be within the scope of the present invention, which fully encompasses all such other embodiments.